

INSPECTION REPORT

Villa Real Special School

Consett

LEA area: Durham

Unique Reference Number: 114345

Inspection Number: 67042

Headteacher: Mrs Fiona Wood

Reporting inspector: Mrs Noreen Buckingham

Dates of inspection: 6th - 10th December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708334

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	2 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Villa Real Road Consett County Durham DH8 6BH
Telephone number:	01207 503651
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Maura Radford
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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T Heppinstall, Lay Inspector		Attendance; Support, guidance & pupils' welfare; Partnership with parents & the community; Accommodation
M Whitehead, Team Inspector	Equal opportunities; Science; Information technology; Design and technology; Art	Attitudes, behaviour & personal development; Efficiency of the school; Resources
D Pearson, Team Inspector	Mathematics; physical education; Music; Post-16;	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social & cultural development
M McCabe, Team Inspector	Special educational needs; English; History; Geography;	Curriculum & assessment; Staffing

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Relationships at all levels within the school are excellent.
- The curriculum offered to the pupils is very good.
- Procedures for assessment are very good and staff make very good use of assessment to inform future planning.
- Careers education and guidance are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good.
- The ethos of the school is very good.
- The provision for pupils' social development is very good.
- Links with the community, especially other schools at all phases, are very good.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- The school provides good value for money.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. There is a lack of clarity within the current autistic provision with regard to its' role and function.
- II. The school does not meet statutory requirements regarding the provision of Religious Education at Key Stage 1 and Post 16.
- III. The governing body has not yet fully developed its' role with regard to monitoring and evaluating teaching nor to curriculum development.
- IV. The staff have not been provided with up to date training in Child Protection.
- V. There is no written record of all pupils who leave and return to the school site during the school day.

The weaknesses are far outweighed by what the school does well, but they will form the basis of the governors' action plan which will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

This is the school's first inspection.

Whether pupils are making enough progress

Progress in:	By 5	By 11	By 16	By 19		
Targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B		Key
English:						y
listening and speaking	C	B	B	A	<i>very good</i>	<i>A</i>
reading	C	B	B	B	<i>good</i>	<i>B</i>
writing	C	B	B	B	<i>satisfactory</i>	<i>C</i>
Mathematics	C	C	B	B	<i>unsatisfactory</i>	<i>D</i>
Science	C	B	B	B	<i>poor</i>	<i>E</i>
Personal, social and health Education (PSHE)	A	A	A	A		

*IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs

In most subjects pupils make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress in many subjects in lessons and over time. The progress pupils make in their personal and social skills helps to prepare students well for leaving school.

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Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Up to 5 years	Good	Creative development	
5 – 11 years	Good	English	
11 – 16 years	Good	English, science	
Post-16	Very good	English, science, Design technology	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		
Personal, social and health education (PSHE)	Good		

The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in ninety-five percent of lessons; it was good or better in seventy-five percent or better of lessons and teaching was very good or excellent in thirty-three percent of lessons. In only five percent of lessons is teaching unsatisfactory. Teaching is good overall. Teaching for Post 16 students is judged to be very good. Unsatisfactory teaching was mainly due to the ineffective management of disruptive behaviour of a minority of pupils.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses

.

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour is good. Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good and this has a positive impact on the progress they make.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. The school has a positive policy to encourage attendance. Transport generally arrives on time allowing lessons to start on time.
Ethos*	The ethos within the school is very good. Relationships at all levels are excellent which promotes a positive climate for learning.
Leadership and management	The school is well managed. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by an able deputy. The governing body is very supportive of the work of the school but has yet to fully to develop its' monitoring and evaluation role of many aspects of the school.
Curriculum	The curriculum is very good and very well planned to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Assessment is also very good and used well to plan pupils' work.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Provision for pupils' social development is very good and good for spiritual, moral and cultural development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Staffing is satisfactory overall although there are a number of temporary staff. The new school buildings offer very good accommodation and new opportunities for learning in a range of specialist rooms. Resources are satisfactory and generally meet the needs of the curriculum.
Value for money	The quality of teaching is good and pupils make satisfactory progress. The school gives good value for money.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

• **The parents' views of the school**

What most parents like about the school

- VI. Parents find it easy to approach the staff of the school.
- VII. Pupils achieve a good standard of work.
- VIII. Parents receive good quality information.
- IX. Parents like the recently introduced inclusion project of all pupils.
- X. Pupils are happy in school.

What some parents are not happy about

- XI. Parents expressed concern about the lack of a full
- XII. Some parents are not satisfied with the work

At the parents meeting very positive views were expressed about the homework and the use of the home/school diaries and the inspectors agreed with these views.

• **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

The numbers in brackets after each key issue indicate the paragraphs in which the weaknesses are discussed.

Whilst sustaining and further developing the many strengths of the school the headteacher, governing body and staff should :

1. Further develop the role of the governing body as a critical friend by becoming more actively involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and curriculum development (paragraphs 35 & 60)
 - Providing appropriate training for governors
 - Developing and formalising systems to undertake this role
 - Setting up a curriculum sub- committee to monitor curriculum developments
1. Establish with the LEA clear terms of reference and guidelines for the new autistic provision which has been recently established within the school (paragraphs 33 & 59)
2. Provide up to date training in child protection for every person employed by the school (paragraphs 47 & 64)
3. Meet statutory requirements by providing religious education for pupils at Key Stage 1 and students at Post 16 by; (paragraphs 30 & 112)
 - Adjusting the timetable to make time for religious education to be taught
 - Ensuring that the curriculum meets the age and abilities of these groups of pupils and students
1. Ensure that a written record is maintained of all pupils who leave from or return to the school site during the day (paragraph 45)

5. INTRODUCTION

5. Characteristics of the school

1 Villa Real School is situated in the old steel works town of Consett in the largely rural north west area of County Durham. The demise of the steelworks and the transfer of the local general hospital to Durham has resulted in high levels of unemployment in the area. Villa Real school is a maintained day special school offering education for up to 60 pupils between the ages of 2 and 19 years. Although most of the pupils are resident in Derwentside, pupils are now admitted from all parts of Durham County. Whilst the majority of pupils have severe and/or profound and complex difficulties, some of the youngest pupils are on the autistic continuum. There are 56 pupils on roll and all but one has a statement of special educational needs. One pupil has been admitted on an assessment placement. No pupil is from an ethnic minority background.

2 The school has very recently moved into a new building and has been part of the LEA special needs review. Thirteen new pupils were admitted at the start of the Autumn term resulting in a 25 per cent increase in numbers. Following this increase there has also been an increase in staffing. The school has reorganised classes to practice its' inclusion policy so that pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties are included in all classes. There are 38 boys and 18 girls on roll. Over half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals.

3 The school's vision is one of a dynamic, well resourced school at the heart of the community working as part of a multi-professional team which will strive to meet new challenges and to improve the quality of education for all pupils.

3

Key indicators

3 Vocational Qualifications - 1998–1999

4 students gained Bronze Level ASDAN Award.

3

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed			%
Through absence for the latest complete Reporting year:	Authorised	School	10.8
	Absence	National comparative data	8.6
	Unauthorised	School	0
	Absence	National comparative data	2.7

3

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during The previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	0
	Permanent	0

3 **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:	%
Very good or better	33
Satisfactory or better	95
Less than satisfactory	5

3

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

3 **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

3 **Attainment and progress**

4 The characteristics of the pupils and students for whom the school caters makes it inappropriate to judge their attainments against age related national expectations or averages. The report does however, give examples of what pupils know, understand and can do by the end of key stages. Judgements about progress take account of information contained in pupils' statements, annual reviews, IEPs and samples of work.

5 Across the school the majority of pupils make satisfactory and often good progress both in lessons and over time. The overall population of the school is changing with the addition of a small group of pupils who are on the autistic continuum, in addition to pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and complex learning difficulties who, since September, are now included into individual classes. Last year four students gained the Bronze level in the ASDAN Award Scheme.

6 This is the first year that pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties have been included in classes alongside their peers and staff have had to adjust their teaching planning and strategies to match the individual needs of these pupils. The knowledge they have of these pupils is used very effectively to help them feel comfortable and ready to work, and also to identify appropriate strategies which will encourage them to respond and join in activities. These pupils and students are making at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress.

7 In English, pupils make good progress overall. In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils listen and respond to instructions from teachers appropriately either verbally or by using the relevant sign and some pupils show their understanding by carrying out the action. Older pupils and students chat socially with adults at lunchtimes and playtimes. Very young pupils enjoy listening to stories and handle books carefully. Some are beginning to select their own name from cards and higher attaining pupils are beginning to understand that print has some meaning and have a basic sight vocabulary. All pupils have access to the library to choose a favourite book and pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties learn the sequence of a story through tactile stimulation. All pupils are improving their writing skills from the youngest making marks, drawing horizontal and vertical lines to older pupils and students writing with a well formed and legible print.

8 In mathematics pupils make good progress overall. In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils are learning to sort objects of different sizes and match primary colours successfully. Higher attaining pupils can count to 20 with some help and most are improving their recognition of numbers up to 10. The Numeracy Strategy, when well organised, is supporting the progress made by pupils in mathematics. Pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties are developing object permanence when playing games and they can indicate preferences by using switches. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 continue to build on previous knowledge of number concepts and are gaining an understanding about time. Most are learning to recognise coins and use money when shopping for cookery items. Post 16 students are

developing a good understanding, in practical situations, of weight and capacity when working at the agricultural college. Good use is made generally throughout the school of information technology in mathematics.

- 9 Overall pupils make good progress in science. They make relevant gains in their knowledge and understanding of living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. They are introduced to scientific vocabulary appropriate to their abilities At Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils are learning about the changing state of materials when they mix flour, water and a colouring agent when making a modelling substance. They are also acquiring insights into various aspects of light sources, initially by using their own powers of observation. This is continued in Key Stage 3 when pupils investigate the properties of sound. They experiment with elastic bands and investigate how far sound will travel. In Key Stage 4 pupils have acquired the confidence to experiment with work with batteries and bulbs to make simple circuits. Students at Post 16 classify fruits and vegetables successfully stating which grow above the ground and which are underneath.
- 10 Pupils make good progress in information technology and become increasingly able to use information technology as they progress through the school and it is used to support the majority of subjects. Pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties are given opportunities to use switches to respond to questions and to make their needs known. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 use interactive toys appropriately and others know how to switch the computer on and off correctly. Older pupils and students are acquiring increasingly complex skills to use information technology for their daily work, such as word processing, electronic keyboards, tape recorders and the digital camera. Students attending the local college are learning how to use vacuum forming machines and photographic enlargers as part of their art and technology course.
- 11 Progress in religious education is satisfactory. They have an appropriate level of understanding of the meaning of Christmas and other Christian customs and also learn about other faiths and their cultural festivals. However, religious education is currently not available to pupils at Key Stage 1 and students in the Post 16 group and this does not meet statutory requirements.
- 12 Scrutiny of work in history and geography showed that pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils' progress in art is good. They are acquiring skills in using a variety of media such as paints, crayons, materials and paper and are beginning to appreciate colour and texture differences. The work they produced with the help of a Community artist is very good and they are rightly very proud of it. In the Food Technology lessons observed during the inspection pupils are making good progress. They become increasingly aware of hygiene requirements as they make a range of foods and meals.
- 13 The progress that pupils make in music is good overall. They enjoy playing hand chimes and a range of percussion instruments. Most can stop and start their playing at the correct time with a little prompting. In physical education pupils make good progress overall. All pupils make improvements in gross motor skills and the soft play area enables younger children and pupils to develop interactive games and use switches to achieve their desired effect. Older pupils and students show great enjoyment and developing skills in dancing.
- 14 Students over 16 in the newly established Sixth Form make good progress in all areas of the curriculum. The range of activities they are offered both in and outside the school enables them build on previously learned skills and use them in a variety of situations. They make good progress in communicating in a variety of situations and this increases their confidence and is preparing them well for leaving school. Work experience placements and college experiences contribute significantly to their personal development.
- 14 **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**
- 15 Villa Real School community offers excellent opportunities for pupils of all ages to show the positive

and caring qualities which are very prevalent in all aspects of the school day. All pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and are pleased to behave well with older pupils and students showing a very high level of maturity.

16 There is a mutual respect between adults and pupils in the school which promotes excellent relationships between all staff and pupils, and between pupils and their peers. Overall pupils behave well in lessons, they listen carefully to what teachers have to say and are keen to ask questions and complete the work which they are given. Throughout the school pupils help each other and often work in pairs or small groups. There are many times during the week when it is necessary for pupils to take turns in using materials or equipment and it is at these times when they display a sensible and mature attitude as they wait patiently for their turn. At these times the higher attaining pupil will often offer help to his lower attaining friend. Throughout the school pupils stay on task during lessons and there are many times when the tasks demand that pupils work independently. In this situation pupils behave in a very mature manner and make a very good effort to complete the task unaided.

17 The recently formed School Council, comprising pupils from different year groups, enables the pupils to learn about the voting system when they elect representatives. During their quarterly meetings discussions take place which have a significant effect upon the lives of the pupils of Villa Real School, for example, a choice of colour for the school sweatshirt for senior pupils and students. Council meetings are conducted properly, always following a prepared agenda and the recorded minutes are shared amongst the rest of the class. This process has a very positive effect on pupils' self confidence and esteem. Since the school has occupied its new premises, the council has discussed the experience of the new style schooling. They have expressed some concerns about the break times and this is now being looked into by the teaching and support staff.

18 During the rehearsal for the school's Christmas tableau in the local Parish Church, pupils were extremely well behaved and considerate of each other. They respected the sanctity of the Church by being very quiet and moving around very carefully.

19 The very positive attitudes and the good quality of teaching throughout the school ensures that pupils will learn to their maximum potential when in school. Throughout the school older pupils take responsibilities for moving chairs, carrying registers and opening the doors for the disabled pupils.

19 **Attendance**

20 The attendance level has been in the range 86 per cent - 90 per cent for several years including the current academic year. This is satisfactory since it is in line with the national average for special schools. Unauthorised absence is relatively low and this is due, in part, to good co-operation from the majority of parents. The school makes considerable efforts to re-establish pupils with severe attendance problems and, whilst this reflects the school's caring attitude, it has an unfavourable effect on the statistics. A few pupils have holidays in term time but this practice is discouraged and is currently not a problem.

21 Punctuality is dependent mainly on the efficiency of transport contractors. It is generally good and closely monitored by the school. Registration is carried out efficiently and enabling lessons to start on time.

21 **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

21 **Teaching**

- 22 The quality of teaching in the school across all key stages is good and it is very good overall in the Sixth Form. During the inspection the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in ninety five percent of lessons, it was good or better in forty three percent of lessons and very good or excellent in thirty three percent of lessons. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only five percent of lessons. The good quality teaching is a positive influence on pupils' progress.
- 23 The best teaching is characterised by excellent lesson preparation and excellent, productive relationships among everybody in the classroom resulting in good teamwork. In addition, teachers' knowledge of pupils' abilities enables them to give pupils maximum responsibility allowing all pupils to participate at their own level. These lessons are busy and the teacher has a lively approach resulting in a brisk pace and no time being wasted. A good introduction sets the tone and a useful plenary session is used for assessment and for giving feedback to pupils. The resources used are appropriate to the age and needs of the pupils.
- 24 Unsatisfactory teaching occurs when behaviour is not controlled and the teacher is adopting a reactive approach to the disruptions condoning the poor behaviour. In these lessons time is wasted and the planning is poor with no clear aims resulting in confused messages being given to pupils. There is no structure to the lessons and pupils do not learn or make progress.
- 25 A consistent form for lesson planning is used which is detailed and shows that teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of pupils' individual needs. Most lessons are carefully structured with clear aims for each lesson and teachers are aware of the targets within pupils' individual education plans (IEP). The planned plenary sessions at the end of most lessons gives both pupils and staff time to reflect about what has been learned during the lesson and gives the teacher an opportunity to assess the progress pupils are making.
- 26 Teachers have sound knowledge of the subjects for the level at which they teach and all use signing very effectively to support pupils' understanding and ability to gain the most from lessons. Technical subject language is kept to a minimum so that it is within pupils' comprehension and they know what is required of them. All teachers are well organised and they make good use of an appropriate range of teaching methods. A feature of the most successful lessons is the enthusiasm and lively approach of the teacher which sets the tone of the lesson and as a consequence pupils are well motivated. Teachers have appropriate strategies to support pupils' independent skills, for example, the majority of classes use a rota for organising drinks which encourages pupils' sense of responsibility.
- 27 In most lessons teachers have appropriate and sometimes high expectations of pupils' ability to concentrate on a task and show understanding of what is being said. Pupils are generally very well managed and teachers develop very good relationships within the classroom which enables them to make their expectations very clear. In most lessons teachers wait for all pupils to respond to questions and to make themselves understood using whatever means is usual and this helps all pupils make progress in their communication skills. Where there are instances of poor behaviour most teachers manage these well but within the older autistic class behaviour difficulties can be prolonged and disrupt learning for a considerable length of time. The inclusion of pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties has resulted in all staff having to consider the best ways of managing this and of learning new ways to ensure that these pupils encounter meaningful experiences within the classroom.
- 28 Most teachers make good use of time and available resources. In lessons such as, religious education, the good choice of resources helps to motivate pupils and maintain their interest. The use of tactile resources for pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties ensures that they are included in the lesson and have relevant access to the National Curriculum. Support staff play an important role in keeping pupils engaged on the activity and, in the case of the pupils with autism, managing behaviour and helping social interactions.

29 Throughout the school good use is made of home-school books to maintain a useful dialogue with parents. Although there is not a great deal of written work, teachers comments provide a very useful record of progress for individual pupils. Assessment information is used effectively to plan future work and set suitable individual targets on IEPs.

29 **The curriculum and assessment**

30 The school provides a very good broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. All statutory requirements are met with the exception that religious education is not taught to pupils at Key Stage 1 and students over sixteen. All subjects are planned to ensure that all pupils have full access wherever possible to the National Curriculum.

31 The school has made a conscious decision to include those pupils with additional special educational needs in classes alongside their peers and these arrangements are working very well. Lessons are planned to ensure that pupils who have profound and complex learning difficulties are given work which is appropriate to their individual level of need. Their progress is very carefully monitored through their individual education plans and parents express whole hearted support for these arrangements which they feel have had a very positive impact on the development of their children. Arrangements are made for these pupils to have opportunities to use the soft play area and the planned light room which will enhance their tactile awareness and stimulates their senses. Aromatherapy is occasionally used to help pupils relax and also stimulate their senses. The school makes very good provision for all pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development. It works hard to fulfil its commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils resulting in its recent inclusion project ensuring that all pupils experience the same education and are offered the same opportunities. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, the buildings and activities.

32 Provision for pupils' personal and social education is very good. The school takes every opportunity to ensure that pupils become independent in as many areas of their lives as possible. From an early age they are encouraged to make choices such as which snack or drink they would like to have and all pupils have the opportunity to organise these sessions. The school plans these arrangements very carefully and pupils' personal and social development is included in their individual education plans alongside English, mathematics and information technology. The school's personal and social education programme includes arrangements to teach sex education and to give pupils advice on the appropriate use of drugs and medication.

33 Very good arrangements are made to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education through links with colleges of further education and local employers. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum although the school should give further consideration to the role of the newly established classes for autistic pupils which have been included by the local authority in the provision which the school is designed to offer. The school is making good attempts to ensure that this provision is effective but there is currently a lack of clarity over the precise nature of the provision and over the long term intentions for pupils in these classes. Additionally, the provision is being used as an assessment facility for a small number of pupils whose presence is inappropriate and whose intellectual potential is not being fully developed.

34 The curriculum is enhanced by a very good range of visits and by very carefully structured arrangements for pupils to work alongside their peers in mainstream schools. These arrangements involve pupils of all ages and include infant, primary and secondary schools as well as colleges of further education. Pupils from mainstream schools visit the school to work alongside pupils and Villa Real pupils alternate these visits by going to the mainstream schools. The school plans very carefully to identify the intended outcomes of these arrangements for its pupils and all parties including mainstream and Villa Real parents are very supportive of them. The curriculum is also enriched by residential opportunities offered to pupils such as visits to a residential centre at Kielder.

35 The curriculum is planned around a series of topics which extend over a four year period. Teachers plan very effectively to teach all subjects through the medium of these topics. Teachers' medium term planning is regularly checked by the co-ordinators for each subject to ensure that all aspects of each subject are taught to all pupils over a period of time. The school has recently reorganised its curricular provision and is aware of the need to amend its planning to take account of these changes. Included in the School Development Plan are subject action plans which clearly identify future developments. Although curriculum co-ordinators check teachers' planning they do not have the opportunity to monitor the teaching of their subjects across the school. Additionally, the governing body has until very recently not been sufficiently involved in curriculum development.

36 The school has very good arrangements to assess pupils' progress and the use it makes of these arrangements to plan pupils' work is also very good. Teachers have very clear information about pupils' ability and progress from a variety of formal and informal methods. A range of external tests is used to assess pupils' capabilities both upon entry to the school and annually thereafter. The information from these tests and from the school's own "Milestones" documents is used to plan for pupils' individual needs through their individual education plans. These documents are excellent. They include very precise learning objectives for each pupil. These objectives are used in the teaching of all subjects and regularly reviewed in the light of pupils' progress. Those pupils who have additional behavioural needs have detailed plans which give all staff precise advice as to the nature of these difficulties and the appropriate action to take when difficulties arise. The school has begun to use the recently introduced national scales to measure pupils' progress before they reach the early levels indicated in the National Curriculum. This information is being used to set annual targets for whole school improvement. The school keeps careful records of pupils' work and achievements over their time in school. Good use is made of photographs and videos in the maintenance of these records. Very good use is made of the expertise of outside professionals, such as speech therapists, in the assessment and review of pupils' progress and the school ensures that pupils do not miss lessons on a regular basis when they work with these professionals.

36 **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

37 The schools' provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good and for their social development it is very good. This enhances pupils' ability to benefit from the curriculum and has a positive impact on the progress they make in lessons and in their development in and out of school. Positive attitudes to work and the formation of good relationships are especially beneficial for students experiencing work and college placements. Pupils with more complex learning difficulties are successfully included in lessons and in the social life of the school.

38 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good and encouraged by stories and values generated through religious education lessons and assemblies. Sensory awareness and tactile experiences encourage awareness for pupils with more complex needs. The daily act of collective worship brings pupils together to pray and sing and celebrate festivals and personal achievements. They think of others less fortunate and raise funds to support a variety of charities in the community and abroad. On a residential week at the Keilder Centre older pupils enjoyed a visit to the wild bird sanctuary and adopted an owl called Frost. At a local agricultural college students have watched lambs being born and help to weigh and feed them. Educational visits to local museums and churches provide time for reflection and to take part in services with their friends. The good plenary sessions at the end of some lessons ensure all pupils have opportunities for sharing and thinking together. Pupils are finding great pleasure and wonder in the new school surroundings.

39 There is good provision throughout the school day to promote positive relationships. Most pupils understand right from wrong and interact well with each other and adults. Staff provide good role models and older pupils partner younger and less able pupils during lessons and social occasions. Key Stage 4 and post 16 students further develop positive attitudes, moral awareness and citizenship through their Careers work, college attendance and work placements. Through a conservation trust students care for the environment by planting bulbs and trees, re-cycle items and collect paper. During

'Circle' time pupils can say what qualities they appreciate in a friend and what constitutes a bully.

- 40 The school makes very good provision to help pupils relate positively to each other and understand the responsibilities of belonging to a community. This is promoted successfully through the school aims. Personal education is emphasised throughout the day which helps each pupil to grow in independence and also to be a member of the school and local community. The good range of links with mainstream schools is very good at promoting pupils social interactions and gives them good, relevant role models for social behaviour. Pupils with more challenging behaviour have individual management plans and targets which provide clear and supportive parameters for them. Post 16 students are aware that they are expected to behave in a mature and sensible way while at college and on work experience placements. This is clear from photographic evidence, work and certificates. Good behaviour, work and improvement are celebrated in achievement assemblies with pupils showing delight in their own and each others achievements.
- 41 There is good provision to help pupils appreciate their own culture and to gain an understanding of different beliefs and traditions. Teachers ensure the school is involved in local theatre events such as visiting dancers from Russia and Peruvian musicians. Visitors from China, Asia and Africa have joined with pupils and staff of the school for particular events both in and out of school which have further extended their understanding of different cultures. Interactive music sessions provide experiences of a wide variety of musical instruments and folk songs in which pupils join with enthusiasm. Country dancing is enjoyed by older pupils who competently dance together in sets. As a follow up to listening to the story of Romeo and Juliet, pupils attended a local theatre to watch a production of the play. Art work is attractively displayed with Divas made out of clay and beads and art work in the Impressionist style. Visiting artists contribute well to pupil experiences with a large frieze of Giants from local folk lore and beautiful coloured flowers. Students work in the college art department with art students using photography techniques to produce some very good work which illustrates a collage of their hands.

41

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

- 42 The school provides a high standard of educational and personal support for pupils and staff are always available to pupils and sensitive to their individual needs.
- 43 Procedures to monitor academic performance and personal development are very good. The school has a culture of carefully recording progress and the pupils' Records of Achievement are a good example. These provide a very comprehensive overview of pupils' progress and abilities. The benefits of good recording and monitoring provisions are enhanced by excellent relationships in the school and by the staff's personal knowledge of the pupils.
- 44 Procedures to monitor and promote discipline are excellent and fully consistent with the school's high expectations of good behaviour. Individual, but detailed, behaviour management plans are prepared where appropriate, the reward and celebration arrangements work well and there is very good co-operation with behaviour support services who offer advice and practical support to the school, pupils and their parents.
- 45 There are good arrangements to monitor and promote attendance. In general, staff and parents are aware of the appropriate procedures, registers are marked consistently and they satisfy legal requirements. There is a satisfactory relationship with the education welfare officer. However, there is no clear procedure to record the details of temporary absence during the school day or when pupils leave early, for example, because of illness.
- 46 Overall, the provisions to promote the pupils' wellbeing and their health and safety are satisfactory but there are some important weaknesses. The level of teaching support in classrooms is adequate and, judged in total, the services provided by visiting specialists, such as physiotherapy, speech and

occupational therapy are satisfactory. However, both the school and parents are concerned about the absence of a resident school nurse. This is certainly not consistent with normal practice. Lunchtime supervisors are competent and undertake their duties efficiently.

47 Whilst the school has an appropriate child protection policy and staff are aware who is the designated person, there has been no recent training in child protection procedures for staff and this is unsatisfactory as all staff need to be well informed and aware of any appropriate action that may need to be taken. However, staff are aware of their responsibility to alert the designated teacher to any concerns. Other areas where there is scope for improved training include lifting and handling techniques and the proper use of physical restraint. This training would also be of benefit to parents who expressed concerns in these areas.

48 The school has staff trained in first aid and there are appropriate procedures to deal with accidents. Although there are appropriate procedures for the security and control of medicines, recording the administration of medicines is not secure and should be reviewed.

49 The school has a health and safety policy but, in practice, considerable reliance is made of common sense and there are no clearly understood formal procedures, for example, regarding the inspection of the premises, however, staff are aware of and very conscientious about their broad responsibilities with respect to health and safety procedures.

49 **Partnership with parents and the community**

50 Evidence from the parents' survey and meeting and from other meetings with parents indicates that there is considerable satisfaction with all aspects of the school. The absence of a school nurse on the premises appears to be the only major parental concern.

51 Information provided for parents is very good. There are six, well attended, formal opportunities per year for parents to visit the school to discuss progress or review educational plans and many more informal opportunities such as coffee mornings. Meetings are also held to provide information about curricula matters such as sex education and literacy. Home/school diaries provide an effective means of two-way communication between the school and parents. Staff are perceived to be approachable and there are no barriers to inhibit parents contacting the school. Pupils' progress reports are detailed and satisfy legal requirements. Newsletters are frequent and provide useful information about day to day issues. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are informative and both satisfy legal requirements.

52 Overall, there is good parental involvement in their children's learning. Three parents help in school on a regular basis and there are opportunities for all to help with homework. On a broader basis, the Villa Real Association, which is partly a fund raising organisation and partly a pressure group has made a major contribution to the quality of life within the school. It was prominent in the campaign for new school buildings and it raises a very useful amount of money each year for school use.

53 The life of the school is significantly enhanced by links with the community. There are a number of very good integration links with other local mainstream schools, some long-standing, allowing regular, reciprocal visits by pupils to their mutual benefit. Local colleges also provide assistance through the use of their facilities and the school receives considerable support from two local supermarkets. Some of these links provide work opportunities for Villa Real's older pupils and students. In addition, the school has links with a local church and pupils participate in community activities such as bulb planting. The school is hoping to increase its community activities by opening a playgroup partly to provide the basis of a support network for parents.

53 THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

53 Leadership and management

54 Overall the leadership and management of the school is good.

55 The headteacher provides strong leadership for the school and is well supported by a very able deputy head. They work well as a team. The governing body is very supportive of the school and, together with the headteacher and deputy head, has developed a clear vision for the future development of the school.

56 The recent school self review undertaken by the school has provided an effective base for the school development plan (SDP). This document is presented to governors after being drawn up by the headteacher and deputy following consultation with all staff. Realistic targets are set to improve standards in English, mathematics and personal and social education. Evaluation of the SDP is undertaken by the senior management team and progress is reported at each governors' meeting for the approval of governors.

57 Monitoring teaching and curriculum planning is undertaken by the headteacher and deputy head who have a well organised programme of classroom visits resulting in feedback to staff and identifying future agreed targets for improvement. Many co-ordinators are relatively new to their posts but have already started to monitor medium term plans, however, they are not allocated time to enable them to monitor teaching in their subjects or evaluate how well planning is put into practice and this restricts their effectiveness.

58 The aims as set out by the school underpin the everyday work of the school and are met very effectively. The school has a wide range of policies and procedures which generally reflect these aims.

59 The recent establishment of two classes for pupils with autism has resulted in the appointment of some temporary staff which has been time consuming and not totally successful resulting in some unsatisfactory teaching and progress for this group of pupils. However, much hard work has been undertaken to reach the present position but there is some uncertainty surrounding the future development of this provision and the impact it may have on the character and organisation of the school.

60 The governing body supports the work of the school but is not yet actively involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and curriculum development. The formation of two sub-committees is a positive step but neither of these has a responsibility for curriculum matters. Although governors are matched with members of staff and have an interest in an identified subject, the necessary training to give governors the confidence to proceed with this function has not yet been offered.

61 Statutory requirements are met with the exception of religious education which is not taught to pupils at Key Stage 1 and students at Post 16.

62 The ethos of the school is very good. The good quality of the relationships among the staff promotes a sense of teamwork and creates a supportive atmosphere in which pupils' personal development and learning can improve. This is reflected in the very positive attitudes of pupils, the satisfaction expressed by the parents and the progress made by the pupils.

62 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

- 63 There is a satisfactory number of experienced and qualified teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum although the overall number of teachers is below the national average for this type of school. A number of teaching staff are on short term or day to day contracts and are inexperienced in the teaching of pupils with special needs and of autistic pupils in the school's recently established provision for these pupils. The school is aware of this and is ensuring that inexperienced teachers are offered good support within school. Permanent teachers are to be appointed as soon as possible and appropriate training has been organised for staff to extend their knowledge and expertise for teaching these pupils. The number of support staff is slightly below the national average but there are sufficient to satisfactorily meet the needs of the curriculum. The school ensures that they are well deployed and all staff work well as a team.
- 64 There are satisfactory arrangements overall for the professional development of staff. The school in common with many others is currently awaiting new guidance on the appraisal of teachers but all staff have regular interviews with the headteacher in which areas for further professional development are identified. The school ensures that staff have access to an appropriate range of relevant training and keeps careful records of the courses attended. Insufficient training has been provided for staff in the administration of medicines, the moving and handling of pupils and in appropriate methods of physical restraint. There is an inadequate level of awareness amongst staff of up to date procedures for child protection.
- 65 The accommodation is new, luxurious and meets the needs of the curriculum very effectively. There is an appropriate range of specialist teaching rooms and provision for specific therapy needs, such as a hydrotherapy pool. A fully equipped flat, mainly for the sixth form students, has been included in the new building and this gives good opportunities for independence training. Parents believe that the new accommodation has improved pupils' attitudes and behaviour. There are concerns that the heavy external doors are difficult to manage when dealing with wheelchairs and other "teething" problems are being steadily resolved.
- 66 The buildings are well maintained and kept scrupulously clean by the caretaker and his staff supporting the positive learning environment. The classrooms and corridors are enhanced by displays of pupils work. Whilst there are sufficient outside play areas for all pupils, there is no fixed outdoor equipment for the very youngest children to play on and to experiment with which would support their physical development.
- 67 There are generally sufficient learning resources which are well used, readily accessible and of good quality but with strengths and weaknesses in some subjects, for example, resources for English, science, history and religious education are good, however, there are insufficient large musical instruments available for the pupils and insufficient resources for some areas of mathematics. The library contains a good number of books for both staff and pupils but a review of the available selection would ensure that all are suitable for the pupils. Whilst the provision of computers in the school comprises some very old and some very new machines, they are all being used very effectively and the software to serve these machines is maintained and well used.
- 68 Resources are readily available to all teachers and are used well. The new accommodation provides much improved storage facilities for resources and ensures that they are easily accessible at all times. Whilst the overall quantity of resources is adequate for the school, the use to which they are being put is good throughout. Good use is made of art resources as can be seen throughout the school in the high quality of artwork and displays which enhance the corridors and classrooms creating a very positive atmosphere.
- 68 **The efficiency of the school**
- 69 There is very good management of administration and budgetary matters. The most recent auditor's report commented favourably on the efficiency of financial management and made six

recommendations for improving the procedures. All recommendations have now been put into practice. The school responds quickly and correctly to recommendations in the annual external audits.

- 70 The headteacher presents very detailed accounts of all spending in the governors' annual report to parents in order to ensure that all parents are fully aware of the way in which money is used within the school. The chair and vice chair of governors keep a watchful eye on the school's finances though the rest of the governing body have limited involvement with financial matters and no formal minutes are kept of the infrequent meetings of the finance sub committee which further inhibits involvement of members of the governing body in the process of financial monitoring. The school receives good support and advice from the finance department of the Local Education Authority which helps them monitor spending.
- 71 The school secretary manages the day to day finances of the school very well and uses a Local Authority approved system and software. Information is backed up daily and tapes are stored securely away from the computer. Systems are reconciled at least monthly and information is available to governors as and when required. All data is kept up to date and stored securely. Carefully detailed procedures are in place to ensure appropriate separation of duties when ordering, receiving and paying for goods. Access to data is carefully controlled and can be obtained only through differing levels of passwords. The financial control and day-to-day administration of the school is excellent. The wide range of tasks is carried out extremely efficiently and ensures very smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis.
- 72 The governing body has established sound written internal financial regulations that are in line with local authority regulations. The financial controls and management within the school are very effective and efficient and access to financial information is very secure.
- 73 The school development plan gives support for educational developments through careful planning. The school makes good use of the available staff, accommodation and learning resources to meet the needs of the pupils. Support staff make a very significant contribution to the pupils' progress.
- 74 Taking into account the progress that pupils make, their good attitudes to learning, the consistently high quality of teaching, the low average cost per pupil and the good use of available staff, resources and finance, the school provides good value for money.

74 **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

74 **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE**

- 75 Children under five make a positive start to school and make good progress overall in the recommended areas of learning. The children vary considerably in the difficulties they present with some having profound and complex learning difficulties and others are on the autistic continuum. Children with autism are taught in a discreet group and other children under five work alongside Key Stage 1 pupils but planning for their individual needs is good. The provision for the autistic pupils is very well organised enabling these pupils to make at least good and sometimes excellent progress. All pupils make good progress in social development. The practice that is followed both through lessons and breaks for snacks and meals helps pupils learn to sit in one place, develop or increase their self help skills and begin to understand the need to co-operate with adults and other pupils. They can choose a drink, toy or game and in these sessions they begin to develop an awareness of other children and interact positively with them.
- 76 In the area of language and literacy children make good progress in understanding and responding to instructions. Good use is made of signing which reinforces the spoken word and also gives children a good model to follow. Children enjoy listening to popular action rhymes and many try hard to copy the teachers' actions. Pupils with more complex difficulties show enjoyment when participating in tactile exploration of objects associated with a favourite story. Most children will look at a book with an adult and some make a free choice to examine books and turn the pages for themselves. Through colouring and drawing activities children are learning pencil control and higher attaining children progress from random mark making to horizontal and, sometimes, vertical lines.
- 77 In mathematics, children are making satisfactory progress when matching primary colours and objects to two attributes. Other children are developing their ability to focus on objects, such as an interactive toy, and make eye contact with adults. Good use is made of number rhymes as an introduction to counting at a very early level. Teachers usually ensure that work is matched to children's needs but sometimes the lessons lack focus and challenge.
- 78 Children often take part in a range of physical activities in large spaces like the hall and in smaller spaces such as the soft play area enabling them to improve their gross motor skills and co-ordination. They demonstrate social interaction when rolling a large ball to each other and develop their confidence when moving around a range of apparatus. The most agile children move independently when climbing and moving through a tunnel. Although children have a safe, secure outside play area, there has been no opportunity for children to play outside recently due to problems with the roof tiles nor is there any large fixed play equipment which would allow children to further develop their physical skills such as climbing and balancing.
- 79 In the area of creative development children make good progress in a range of activities. They enjoy listening to music and are developing their abilities to differentiate between loud and soft noises and playing with percussion instruments enables them to make a range of sounds. Most are content to play on their own but some will tolerate others playing alongside. They have opportunities to make mixed media pictures using various printing techniques, finger painting and brush work. Pupils with autism concentrate very well while experimenting with balloons and paint.
- 80 Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is well promoted by visits, for example to the theatre and to shops. In the autistic class children are beginning to operate the mouse with decreasing physical contact and have an understanding of cause and effect. They have very focused, well structured visits to the shops where their social interactive skills are encouraged, for example, sitting together for drinks in the café. Opportunities are made available for children to explore sand, water and playdough. Good use is made of the new building to help children understand direction.
- 81 Overall the quality of teaching is good with the best teaching occurring in the autistic class where the

excellent management skills coupled with very good understanding of the pupils and an enthusiastic approach, enables children to learn very effectively. Her gentle insistence enables positive behaviours to be reinforced and any negative instances are firmly, but kindly, addressed. Throughout the early years there is good understanding between all staff resulting in an effective partnership which supports pupils learning resulting in good progress. All staff know the children well and use this when setting targets for IEPs and planning the curriculum.

82 Currently the Early Years named co-ordinator is on long term absence and this, coupled with the setting up of a new class for autistic children, results in teachers who are new to this department of the school and there are few opportunities for them to focus on future needs and areas for development within the department. The curriculum follows the Desirable Outcomes and children are offered a range of suitable activities which broadens their experiences and which have a positive impact on their progress. Assessment procedures enable staff to set appropriate and achievable targets on children's IEPs.

82 ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

82 English

83 Pupils' progress in English is good overall. The school is successful in promoting pupils' independence in the skills of communication through speaking, listening and the recognition and use of signs and symbols. Throughout the school, pupils develop their confidence in and enjoyment of their ability to communicate with others. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 settle quickly in lessons and listen to instructions or explanations from the teacher as to the content of the lesson. They show their understanding for example by placing a card in an envelope which indicates the lesson they are about to do. Pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties develop their ability to communicate through eye contact or gesture and in some cases, they begin to vocalise their choices. They make good use of large switches to convey their intentions. They respond to a range of sensory stimulation as for example when they follow a Nativity story and feel the woolly coat of a toy sheep. Higher attaining pupils towards the end of the Key Stage 3 express their opinions and comments verbally describing the Nativity story by saying, "It's about a king and a queen," and "It's got three kings." By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils maintain their good progress. They listen very carefully in lessons; for example, one pupil describes a Christmas stocking as, "Santa Claus's foot." Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties show an increasing ability to vocalise and to use signs. One tries very hard to articulate the name "Aaron" that another pupil has used and another makes a pull sign to indicate that the object is a Christmas cracker. Pupils in the Post 16 group are becoming increasingly confident in expressing their views and when answering questions. Their language is simple but clearly understood and group discussions support the development of their communication skills.

84 Pupils' progress in reading is good throughout the school. In Key Stage 1, pupils choose a sign which indicates their favourite activity of juice and biscuits. Lower attaining pupils respond with facial and physical gestures to a range of external visual stimuli such as a gentle water spray which the teacher uses to indicate rain. Most pupils enjoy stories and handle books carefully and the higher attaining pupils look at the pictures and turn the pages with support. The majority are able to join in familiar rhymes. A few pupils recognise their own name and can sometimes match the name with a photograph. Higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 2 choose an elephant sign in response to a story and correctly identify and say the signs and words for mum and dad. Pupils towards the end of the key stage show good progress in the development of their formal reading skills through the use of the school library. In a lesson which is joined by pupils from a mainstream primary school, pupils are paired with mainstream pupils and are helped to choose a favourite book. They then ask by pointing or taking the hand of the mainstream pupil for the book to be read to them. They respond to skilful questioning from the special support assistant and the book is then signed out to them and they take it home. During Key Stage 3, pupils maintain their good progress. They successfully undertake a variety of reading activities such as the matching of pictures and letters. Higher attaining pupils say

“good morning” when shown the appropriate sign and word and recognise photographs of home and school saying the appropriate words. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils suggest words beginning with A such as ambulance. They recognise words from their initial letters and with support they read back short poems they have written beginning with individual pupils’ names. By the time students have reached the Post 16 group they read some signs which will be useful to them when they leave school and identify the names of some television programmes. Some higher attaining students can anticipate the sequence of a story and use suitable descriptive words appropriately.

- 85 Pupils’ progress in writing by the end of Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. At the beginning of Key Stage 1, higher attaining pupils follow dots on paper to draw the letter C. Lower attaining pupils trace the same letter following the shape on sandpaper stuck to card. By the end of Key Stage 2, higher attaining pupils are developing their ability to trace over the teachers’ writing with increasing accuracy and some can write independently. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in writing. They build on the skills they have learnt earlier in the school. They use the computer to copy signs and words on the screen using individual letters and whole words. Good progress in writing continues in Key Stage 4 as higher attaining pupils discriminate between ch and sh spellings for example. Other pupils consolidate their handwriting skills and remember the spellings of words containing “ai” such as rain. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils develop their understanding of words that rhyme. As the teacher reads a story, they suggest that “eat” rhymes with “feet” and that “much” rhymes with “touch.” Lower attaining pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties improve their accuracy in drawing lines in consistent directions. They increase the length of the line when the teacher asks so that it starts at the top of the page instead of halfway down. Post 16 students practice filling on forms and record their work using well formed letters mainly of a uniform size. The higher attaining students are improving their word processing skills to record their work.
- 86 Progress for a small number of recently admitted autistic pupils in Key Stage 2 varies in all aspects of English. The progress of these pupils is satisfactory overall in lessons but occasionally it slows and becomes unsatisfactory when they do not have the undivided attention of an adult. These pupils have made good progress over time as shown in their improvement against the targets in their individual education plans. However, they are not yet able to work even for short periods unless an adult is with them. They revert to their obsessive behaviour until an adult has time to give them attention.
- 87 Pupils have very good attitudes overall to English. They enjoy and appreciate the improvements they make. Those with the most severe difficulties show pleasure as they anticipate their turn in sharing the experiences of a story being read by the teacher with the help of physical aids. Higher attaining pupils clap each other when they succeed in part of a lesson. Pupils of all abilities concentrate for relatively long periods on the lessons and only occasionally do a small minority have minor tantrums and refuse to participate in the lessons. These occasions are usually very well managed by the teacher. Pupils are given firm instructions but confrontation is avoided and they understand that their behaviour will not be accepted quickly calming down and participating in the lesson. In the lesson with pupils from a mainstream school, pupils’ attitudes, confidence and behaviour are excellent. They are proud of their friends from the other school and they invite them to help with their reading by taking their hand or by offering them a book to read.
- 88 There is no unsatisfactory teaching in English and the majority of teaching is very good. All teaching in Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 3 is very good. Teachers’ planning in the majority of lessons is very good. They have a very clear idea of the abilities and stages of development of individual pupils and lessons are planned according to these needs. Pupils’ individual education plans are very carefully written and form the basis of much of the individual teaching which takes place in the school. Teachers’ use of assessment in English is very good. Teachers monitor the progress made by pupils very closely and adjust the content and pace of their teaching to take account of this progress. Pupils are generally very well managed and teachers develop very good relationships with pupils which allows them to make their expectations clear to pupils. This enables pupils to concentrate on their work and helps them to develop increasing independence and responsibility for the management of their own behaviour. In a lesson where a pupil was behaving immaturely, she was firmly asked to sit to one side until she became sensible. The teacher waited for a short time and invited the pupil back to

her side giving her a supportive and encouraging comment.

89 The school places great emphasis on the development of pupils' skills in communication not just in English lessons but across the whole school. Opportunities to develop these skills are carefully written into the individual education plans of every pupil. These plans form the basis for much of the individual teaching which takes place in all subjects. In geography for example, pupils learn about versions of the Christmas story in other parts of the world. Higher attaining pupils then rehearse a play about Christmas. They understand the taking of parts in the play and they understand when it is their turn and that the narrator will introduce their turn to speak. Very careful records are kept of the individual progress of every pupil so that lessons can build on this progress and allow pupils to develop further. Occasionally, the lack of sufficient staff limits the progress in lessons of older autistic pupils. There are insufficient staff to provide these pupils with the individual attention which best promotes their progress. Lessons are broadly planned on the format of the National Literacy Strategy which has been well adapted to meet the needs of pupils in the school.

89 **Mathematics**

90 In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils make good progress in mathematics in lessons and over time towards individual targets. Throughout these key stages pupils are developing object permanence by playing games of hiding and finding. They enjoy matching primary colours and everyday objects and shapes. Exciting number games and songs reinforce their learning. They can count on their fingers and count simple amounts to five. Pupils with more complex difficulties are encouraged to grasp and track objects and find items in a "feely" bag. They are increasing knowledge of their world and show this with smiles and gestures of pleasure. A few pupils can copy a repeat pattern of two colours and sort large and small objects. The best progress is seen where teachers are using the Numeracy model which gives good structure to the lesson with clear achievable tasks. Higher attaining pupils can count to 20 using a number line and record their answers with help, they perform simple addition and subtraction. Many pupils are improving their concepts of recognising numbers to 10 and follow time tables and time lines well. A few pupils hold a pencil correctly and copy numbers. Number programs are used well in ICT to reinforce concepts. Pupils with more complex needs are able to indicate preferences and answers by using Big Mac switches well. Overall pupils make good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 in lessons and over time. In Year 8 pupils match and sort colours and identify colours to complete a picture. Pupils recognise and count numbers to 10, using number rods they add and subtract, they copy simple patterns and name shapes. By the end of Key Stage 4 higher attaining pupils can add up to 20 and back from 20. A few can say what comes next up to 10. In Algebra they repeat colour patterns up to 6 with more consistency. A few pupils tell the time to the hour and all play games to match clock times. They identify shapes and match 2D and 3D shapes to every day objects. Money management and coin recognition is reinforced well with shopping activities for cookery ingredients. Post 16 students use mathematics well in practical activities at the agricultural college where they weigh animal feed, weigh new born lambs and measure amounts of water for the animals. Each week they plan and cook a lunch where they make shopping lists, handle money and select ingredients. ICT is used with effect to support concepts, students are able to press the space bar and print practical work with the careers officer.

91 Mathematics is beginning to be used well across the curriculum. Pupils use the environment around them to identify shapes and patterns in their art work. In physical education they count steps and sequence activities well such as climbing up steps and sliding down the slide. In music pupils count the notes for a rhyming word and clap to the rhythm. Pupils with more complex needs feel textures and shapes to increase an awareness of shape and space. Older students estimate space for a dance routine and complete a sequence for a country dance.

92 Many pupils enjoy number activities and show great enjoyment in singing and acting out number games and rhymes. Pupils working with the physiotherapist show pleasure with smiles and gestures when they reach for an object. When good eye contact is gained pupils are cooperative. Higher attaining pupils attend well and carry out activities in a sensible way to support each other. Where

planning is secure pupils respond with interest and work with purpose on activities. All pupils relate well to adults and a few can describe their work. Most pupils behave well, they are less involved when planning does not account for their intellectual needs.

93 Teaching in mathematics is good with some very good teaching where the Numeracy hour format is followed. Each lesson has a range of activities to meet individual needs with adults working with small groups. Teachers and support assistants work well as a team to develop the mathematical concepts of the pupils in the course of a term. For some young pupils however, there are too many distractions and they require more challenge to move towards new targets. In Key Stage 4 and Post 16 mathematics is effectively taught in a practical way supporting the development of independent skills, work experience and college work. There is appropriate planning and preparation for most lessons with clear instructions and support for pupils. Plenary sessions encourage pupils to talk about their work and demonstrate what they have learned giving teachers opportunities to assess individual progress and give pupils some feedback.

94 The curriculum for mathematics is effective and appropriate using the Cleveland 'small steps' approach'. IEPs are used by most teachers along with comprehensive lesson plans. All pupils are included in the curriculum aims. The co-ordination of mathematics will be more secure when the post is made permanent. Whilst the previous co-ordinator has a good overview of the curriculum co-ordination of mathematics will be more secure when the post is made permanent. Currently medium term plans and lessons are monitored by the senior management team. Good use is made of baseline assessments to inform future planning.

94 **Science**

95 All pupils make good progress in science at all key stages. They gain knowledge and understanding of the subject and are also gaining in confidence as they use basic scientific vocabulary when describing their work. They conduct experiments and are acquiring new concepts, for example, in the development of simple electronic circuits to light a bulb using batteries, bulbs, holders and wires.

96 By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have experienced mixing materials and the change of state as flour, water, salt and colouring are combined to make a 'home made' modelling medium. Many pupils need the help of the teacher to succeed in this task whilst others are able to complete the task on their own. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are gaining considerably in their subject vocabulary and can successfully investigate sources of light. From their own experience and by using their own powers of observation pupils are able to identify many different sources of light. For example, pupils list correctly the sun, fire, car headlights, torches and a camera flash unit as sources of light. They then use battery-powered torches to overcome the darkness inside a cardboard box and are able to investigate the contents of the box. One pupil is totally engrossed in a computer program that tells about the composition of white light. He learns that white light can be split into primary colours and that when white light shines onto a red surface, then it is only the red component that is reflected from that surface.

97 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils investigate the properties of sound. They use elastic bands that are stretched over different objects to create sound by plucking them. Pupils describe accurately the sounds that they hear as loud or soft depending upon the ferocity of the plucking. They also observe the elastic bands as they vibrate and actually see the sound being produced. This experiment is developed further and pupils learn the human ear receives that sound. They then carry out an experiment that shows how far sound will travel and discover that the sound of a small alarm clock can be heard from the other end of the corridor, even through a closed door.

98 By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils are confident enough to experiment with batteries, cables, bulbs and bulb holders. During the course of one lesson pupils developed a simple circuit which lit a small bulb. They then went on to extend this by connecting additional bulbs to the circuit which also lit

successfully. Two pupils working independently created a circuit that connected two bulbs in parallel, whilst another connected three bulbs in series. Students at Post 16 are gaining a widening knowledge and understanding of the world as they identify different fruits and vegetables. They then learn of the difference between fruits and vegetables and classify them successfully.

- 99 All pupils and students are very well behaved in science lessons. They pay great attention to the teachers and other adults in the classrooms and enjoy their lessons. They chat calmly about the topics being studied. There are many times when the higher attaining pupils help those with more severe difficulties. This is a part of their normal routine, working in pairs and helping each other is a part of every lesson. All pupils and students show a very mature attitude towards their work and share equipment willingly. They are delighted with their own success and also enjoy celebrating the success of other pupils.
- 100 The quality of teaching is good throughout the school, and is very good in Key Stage 4 and at Post 16. Teachers give clear explanations to pupils about requirements during the lesson and have very good relationships with them. In lessons where teaching is at its best the pace of the lesson is brisk and the attention and motivation of the pupils is maintained. Teachers ensure that all pupils are able to take fully participate in the lesson taking into account their individual learning difficulties. Lessons are very well prepared and in the best lessons there is a hand-out to reinforce the lesson content and which also contains key words used during the session. Most teachers strive to make science lessons exciting and interesting.
- 101 The curriculum and schemes of work are carefully planned to take into account both the National Curriculum attainment targets and the desirable learning outcomes. This works very successfully and the work of the pupils is assessed regularly. The results of the assessment are used to ensure that future lessons are planned accurately to meet the pupils' individual needs. Science is very well co-ordinated. The resources are good and are extremely well organised. There are sufficient resources to meet the demands of the curriculum and they are further developing as the school settles down to enjoy its new and very good accommodation. Support assistants work well and complement the work of the teachers. This adds to the quality of education being received by the pupils and students. Health and safety issues are given appropriate attention.
- 102 Science plays an important part in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. There are many times when pupils are engrossed, even spell bound by the work they are doing and the discoveries that they make, for example, pupils discover that bulbs connected in series glow only very dimly, whilst those connected in parallel glow much brighter. Turn taking and consideration of others is of paramount importance in the science lessons supporting pupils' moral and social development. Reference is also made to different cultures which is especially evident during the present theme of festivals and celebrations. The science topic of light ties in very well with the Diwali festival being celebrated at this time of year.

102 **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

102 **Information technology**

- 103 Pupils make good progress in all key stages in information technology which occurs throughout the school's curriculum. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have learned to use a single switch to make a toy elephant walk and lift its trunk. When using the ball pool, pupils press the coloured sensitive pads around the edge of the pool to switch on and off the coloured lights that shine through the translucent plastic balls. Pupils are learning to use switches for a purpose and gaining in confidence as they do so. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have learned to play with toys that record their voices when they speak to them and they enjoy playing with the toucan that mimics their voices. Higher attaining pupils use the school photocopier successfully, whilst others switch computers on and off as they required. They are acquiring a range of basic skills in using information technology around the

school.

- 104 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are gaining more sophisticated knowledge and understanding as they activate the infinity tunnel using a single switch. The higher attaining pupils use electronic key boards to make their own music and use tape recorders to listen to pre-recorded music. Pupils also use the computer mouse successfully to access information and activate software on the computer. By the end of Key Stage 4 the range of experience is very wide. Pupils are using word processing software very successfully to prepare labels for displays around the school. They use the cursor key to position the cursor ready for typing, and then copy text correctly from a sheet of paper. If they make mistakes when typing, they are able to edit their work using the delete key and the backspace key. Other pupils use a tape recording/reading machine to reinforce their reading skills whilst others enjoy using switches to activate music and lights in the sensory room.
- 105 Post 16 students use computers for word processing their work and print out hard copies of their work as required. They also use the cooking facilities and the midi hi-fi system in their apartment to cater for themselves and entertain each other. Students also use the school's digital camera to record events and work that they have produced and students who attend the local Tertiary College use vacuum forming machines and photographic enlargers during their courses in art and technology.
- 106 Pupils and students behave well at all times and treat equipment with respect. They are delighted with the results of their work using different equipment. Pupils are totally committed to their work, "I love it!" says one pupil as he works on a computer and edits his own work which he has just copy typed for a school display. Pupils are highly motivated and thoroughly enjoy their work.
- 107 The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Lessons are clearly planned and there are individual tasks for each pupil. These feature on the pupils' individual education plans which are used well during the lessons. Every pupil in the school has information technology targets on his or her individual education plan. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and ensure that lessons proceed at a steady pace. Much teaching of information technology takes place through other subjects and is an integral part of the school's curriculum.
- 108 The subject is well managed and strongly led. Very careful planning goes into every facet of the subject and good use is made of time and resources. There is a range of hardware, some of which is quite old but is used well with appropriate software. The school has a system for upgrading their hardware on a rotational basis as funds become available. The temporary technician is very efficient and ensures that everything works well enabling the pupils to gain the best possible experiences from the resources which are currently available.
- 108 **Religious education**
- 109 Pupils make satisfactory progress overall and although all pupils were involved in the Christmas story during the inspection scrutiny of work and displays around the school indicate that pupils learn about significant festivals of other religions, such as Divali, Holi and Hanukah. The topic for this term is "Festivals and Celebrations" which has allowed for many opportunities for all pupils to learn about weddings, christenings and birthdays, this latter leading nicely into the birth of Jesus. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are learning the sequence of events leading up to the birth of Jesus recognising pictures of Mary and Joseph and accessing a computer programme which improves their understanding of the sequence of events. The higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 know that Mary and Joseph were Jesus' parents and that he was born at Christmas time in a stable. They enjoy making a nativity frieze and identify figures and symbols they have made. By the end of Key Stage 4 the Russian folk story about Baboushka interests pupils and they have a deeper understanding of the Christmas story.
- 110 Pupils attitudes to their lessons are satisfactory. They participate in simple role play and listen with

interest as they hear animal sounds related to the Christmas story. Their concentration and behaviour is good as they carefully handle the resources and pass them around the class each taking a turn to touch, try on or smell. Answering and asking questions is appropriate to their level of understanding. Pupils with complex learning difficulties enjoy the tactile experience of wrapping paper and listening to carols.

- 111 The teaching of religious education ranges from good to unsatisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned and organised using a range of activities and resources to maintain pupils' interest. When behaviour is not managed well teaching is unsatisfactory, lesson aims are not met, time is lost and pupils are not able to make progress. In other lessons encouragement, praise and questions are used well to support learning and to check for understanding.
- 112 The school is not meeting statutory requirements in not teaching religious education to Key Stage 1 pupils and Post 16 students.
- 113 Time is set aside each day for a short assembly which provides regular opportunities to engage in quiet reflection, to pray and sing together and the "Praise" assembly gives time for celebrating successes. These make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual and social development. Resources for the subject are good and cover the six major faiths which are included in the LEA Agreed Syllabus followed by the school but the full range of planning is not yet in place and documentation is not complete.

113

Art

- 114 Art enjoys a high profile within the school and in the classrooms and corridors there are examples of the excellent work done by the pupils who are justifiably proud of their work. Due to the organisation of the timetable some classes were taking food technology lessons rather than art lessons during the week of the inspection, therefore much of the evidence was gained from the scrutiny of the pupils work, discussion with teachers and discussion with pupils.
- 115 By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are using their fingers and hands to create a very impressive painting of pink pigs. They also make some very attractive Christmas decorations using stencils and sponges or spray paints. Coloured tissue paper is used to good effect in making attractive coloured shapes and filling in silhouettes of a variety of shapes. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are using coloured felt pens to decorate Christmas stocking shapes. Pupils make coloured lines or coloured shapes on the card, they are then further decorated by adding gold or silver glitter to make them very festive in appearance. Other pupils study the work of famous artists, for example Bruegel. They scrutinise his painting entitled 'The Numbering at Bethlehem' and then observe other works of his. Following their investigations they then produce a painting in the same style. The results are spectacular, demonstrating that the pupils have studied the houses, trees and bare branches closely and have also discussed another painting entitled 'Hunters in the snow'. Some pupils also produced a large collage entitled "When Santa got stuck up the chimney" which illustrates a story they have been reading.
- 116 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils also produce some very good collages depicting the activities on and around bonfire night. Their artwork shows bonfires, fireworks, Catherine wheels and sparklers. The display was supported by work of other older pupils. It is well finished and well presented around the school. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils cut and shape fabrics and other materials to make a large frieze depicting the Christ's nativity in Bethlehem. Pupils are totally engrossed in their work as they form a production line in order to ensure that the work is finished on time. One pupil makes a foil covered star, another makes the fur fabric to cover the clothes of the characters, another paints strips of paper bright blue to form the sky. Around the school there is evidence of other work completed by the pupils. A large mural shows the vestments used in the marriage ceremony, whilst another very good piece of art work depicts the millennium dome at Greenwich.

- 117 Post 16 students attend a local Tertiary College where they are following a variety of courses, one of which is photography. In this course students use wood shavings pieces of fabric, plastic off-cuts etc to make some very attractive small collages. They photocopy these very successfully onto acetate sheets and then, using these sheets as negatives, they then produce contact prints on light sensitive paper. Pupils are responsible for the timing of the exposures and the developing and printing of the photographs. A further element of sophistication is introduced as the pupils are encouraged to combine two negatives to create a photomontage. The results are quite spectacular.
- 118 The artwork on display around the school is witness to the success of the subject and the high profile that it commands in school. The art co-ordinator work well to ensure that all resources are available to all classes. All pupils make good progress as they gain in skills and experience using basic media to produce exciting work. There are also attractive displays of ceramics which have been made by pupils when attending courses at the local college.
- 119 The behaviour of the pupils in all art lessons at all key stages is good. They enjoy their work, complete the tasks which are set and stay on task throughout the lessons. Pupils listen carefully to all instructions and work sensibly together. They relate well with each other and are willing to ask for advice when they need it. Pupils celebrate each other's good work quite spontaneously.
- 120 The quality of teaching in art lessons is good overall and in half the lessons observed the teaching was very good and excellent. Pupils receive clear direction and a great deal of support from the teacher. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and the teachers' management of the pupils is very good. Teachers move from pupil to pupil offering advice, encouragement and praise. Expectations are high and lessons are very well prepared. Teachers encourage pupils to work together wherever possible and ensure that all pupils have full access to all the equipment and experiences which the subject offers.
- 121 The curriculum is well planned to meet the individual needs of all pupils. The work of pupils is carefully assessed and the results are used when planning the next lessons. Great care is taken to ensure that all pupils are fully involved in lessons. In one lesson a pupil lying on a foam wedge took a full and active part in the lesson as she used adhesive and fixed pieces of card and fabric to backing paper to form sections of a large collage. This was a crucial part of the procedure which was well executed.
- 122 Art is well co-ordinated and the co-ordinator has excellent knowledge of the subject. Art contributes well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils in many ways, such as, reflecting on the work of famous artists, learning to work and enjoy the subject together and benefiting greatly from the experiences which they gain during lessons.
- 123 The new accommodation is excellent and the resources are good. There are not yet sufficient resources to exploit the new accommodation to its full potential, but the available resources are being used well and are appropriate to the needs of the pupils and the demands of the curriculum. Resources are well managed and readily available to all staff.
- 123 **Design and technology**
- 124 The subject is divided into two main areas of study, which are design and technology – resistant materials, and food technology.
- 125 By the end of Key Stage 1, all pupils know that they must wash their hands before they begin preparing food and that protective aprons should be worn. They take turns as they mix ingredients, with the teacher's help, to make biscuits. Flour is spread onto the table top and the biscuit mix is rolled out into a thin layer using wooden rolling pins. Many pupils need help to complete this very

- challenging procedure. Pupils make good progress as they prepare lots of star shapes using a plastic pastry cutter. Other pupils grease a baking tray onto which the uncooked biscuits are placed. The teacher places these carefully into a pre-heated oven and pupils await the results. Whilst the biscuits are baking, pupils are involved in washing up the utensils and putting away the equipment that has been used. During this time pupils work well together helping to tidy away all the equipment. They are well behaved and follow the instructions of the teacher carefully. They are also good at taking turns especially when waiting to stir the mixture or roll out the pastry. Relationships are good during these lessons and pupils work very closely with each other.
- 126 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils work well together making sandwiches, biscuits and toast. At this time of celebration pupils also make peppermint creams which they decorate and present as gifts. The festivals of Christmas and Diwali are studied and food is presented in a form of celebration. Pupils also work with resistant materials and begin to build using plastic interlocking bricks. They also make a very impressive model of a suspension bridge using string, card and thin wooden spools. This is the result of class team work and is very successful.
- 127 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have gained more experience and skills in the preparation of food. They mix icing sugar and lemon juice together to form the topping for biscuits, which they decorate further with small sweets or vermicelli. One pupil prepares a spicy biscuit pastry mix using a food processor. The pastry is then rolled out and shaped using a pastry cutter to form biscuits for the whole class. Pupils discuss the ingredients that they are using and correctly name the utensils they are using. Pupils also recognise the peppermint essence by its smell. When the work is complete, all pupils help to clean the table tops and tidy the room before they leave.
- 128 By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils show a very mature approach to food technology as they discuss the meals which they prepare. Menus are arranged and ingredients are discussed, pupils then arrange to go and buy the necessary items from the shops in the nearby town. During the inspection students in the Post 16 group made their own meal which involved baking potatoes in their jackets, preparing a filling for the jacket potatoes and also peeling and cooking apples from which they made apple crumble. All pupils have assigned tasks and also take initiative when others need help. They open the cans carefully using a mechanical opener, they lay the table taking care to include a place setting of cutlery and serviettes for everyone.
- 129 Progress is good at Key Stage 4 and also at Post 16 as pupils gain in confidence and in the skills required when using kitchen equipment. Progress is good throughout the school in design and technology. Pupils also gain greatly in their confidence and self-esteem as they follow the instructions and guidance of teachers.
- 130 Pupils enjoy their work and are well motivated. The most able pupils often help those who have difficulty walking or holding materials and equipment. Pupils are generally very polite in the way in which they speak to each other and to the staff. All pupils have a very positive attitude to work and are very mature. They are well behaved and very patient with each other when taking turns or waiting to use equipment. Their concentration is good as they follow instructions and try very hard to complete tasks.
- 131 The quality of teaching is generally good throughout the subject. In all key stages relationships between staff and pupils are good. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils especially as far as safety and hygiene procedures are concerned. Lessons are well planned and there are often very good visual aids to help the pupils understand the main points of the tasks. Teachers work extremely well with pupils who are reluctant to concentrate and work and who present more difficult behaviour. The major strengths in the teaching are the good relationships with the pupils, the very good knowledge and understanding of the pupils and the very good lesson preparation. Teachers ensure that all pupils have responsibilities and that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum.
- 132 Design technology contributes well to the moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.

Support staff work very well to enhance the experiences of the pupils especially in the Post 16 group. There is an adequate number of suitably qualified and experienced staff to meet the needs of these pupils. The accommodation is excellent along with flat which is effectively used to develop independence skills and the food technology room offers excellent quality facilities. The department is well co-ordinated and very well managed. The adequate resources are well used, and also offer excellent facilities for independence training of older pupils in the school.

132 **Geography**

133 It was not possible to observe the teaching of geography during the period of the inspection due to the way the curriculum is planned and therefore no judgements can be made about the quality of teaching. Discussions with teachers and a scrutiny of planning and a limited sample of pupils' work demonstrate that the curriculum for geography is satisfactory overall and pupils make satisfactory progress.

134 Opportunities are given to pupils to learn geographical skills from an early age. Doors and areas of the school are labelled and signed as are areas within individual classrooms and appropriate opportunities are given to pupils to find their way around school as independently as possible. Pupils take registers back to the office and higher attaining pupils are given responsibility for showing others the way to specialist areas of the school such as the art room. The school takes many opportunities to familiarise pupils with the local area. Pupils visit shops and supermarkets and the files of higher attaining older pupils show that they record some of the buildings they see during their journeys. The school has also made good use of the recent move to brand new accommodation. Displays show photographs of the old building and pupils remember that it had stairs and was different to their new school. The records of achievement of sixteen year old pupils show that they have made a pictorial map of a journey to the seaside. They have seen photographs of Indian wildlife and coloured a simple map of India. A major contribution to pupils' understanding of geography is the involvement of pupils in an annual "Commonwealth Day." Each class works on a theme related to a different country making relevant flags and where possible, dressing in national costume and tasting regional foods.

135 Teachers' planning shows that geography is taught through the school's four year topic cycle. The subject co-ordinator monitors the planning of other teachers to ensure that the subject is covered in sufficient detail over the year in accordance with the National Curriculum programmes of study.

135 **History**

136 It was not possible to observe the teaching of history during the period of the inspection due to the way the curriculum is planned and therefore no judgements can be made about the quality of teaching. Discussions with teachers and a scrutiny of planning and a limited sample of pupils' work demonstrate that the curriculum for history is satisfactory overall and pupils make satisfactory progress.

137 From an early age, pupils become familiar with the simple language of the passing of time in their own context. They understand words such as yesterday, today and tomorrow and on a daily basis are made familiar with lessons and events which are to take place during the day. By the time they are sixteen their records indicate that they have listened to the story of Guy Fawkes. Higher attaining pupils have coloured in relevant pictures and completed short pieces of writing related to his life and death. Pupils

have also drawn pictures which showed some comparisons between modern farmers using tractors whereas horses were more common in the past. Pupils have regularly visited Beamish museum, dressed up in period costume and experienced activities such as the emptying of ashes and washing in cold water.

138 Teachers' planning shows that history is taught through the school's four year topic cycle. The subject co-ordinator monitors the planning of other teachers to ensure that the subject is covered in sufficient detail over the year in accordance with the National Curriculum Study Units for history

138 **Modern foreign languages**

139 The school has a clear policy and guidelines for the teaching of a modern foreign language which sets out their philosophy appropriately emphasising the development of speaking and listening skills. A French or Spanish week has been organised every two years and this has been insufficient both in terms of time and to enable pupils and students to gain any lasting benefit from the particular language and culture taught at the time. However, the school is now planning an annual culture week which now focuses on French. Pupils are now also given opportunities to practice their skills during some Circle Time sessions and in a very effective group session in the hall pupils confidently greet each other in French and state their name. They name colours, red, blue, green and yellow and show good understanding of these during a game. All pupils are involved and clearly enjoy speaking in a different language. The teacher has a very good understanding of pupils' abilities and sets the tasks accordingly. There is good pace to the session and the strategies used, and the organisation of the activities, has a positive impact on pupils progress. Scrutiny of photographs of last years French week shows that pupils tasted French food, looked at the work of Monet and Renoir and participated in French country dancing. Pupils taking part received a certificate for their Record of Achievement.

140 The co-ordinator, who has no specific specialism in this subject, has ideas for the future development of the subject and is actively seeking to purchase appropriate resources.

140 **Music**

141 Progress in music and musical activities is good throughout all key stages. Music is used to advantage during assembly time when pupils listen to classical music and when performing during the celebration of festivals. By the end of Key Stage 1 young pupils are beginning to develop a sense of stop and start and can remember to stop in a game of 'pass it on'. When performing a few pupils can appreciate singing fast and slow and join in some of the actions and words of the songs. The use of signing alongside the singing helps pupils remember the words and adds to their enjoyment of the lesson. In Key Stage 2 pupils in Year 6 can anticipate the next action sequence, such as stamp your feet and nod your head, joining in with enthusiasm. A few pupils can play percussion instruments loud and soft. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 sing in tune, know most of the words and copy a simple rhythm. They listen attentively and then follow a repetitive rhythm using a range of percussion instruments. A good start has been made to form a lunch time recorder group giving pupils further opportunities to develop their musical abilities to perform. During the week of the inspection pupils demonstrated good progress in reading coloured symbols to play a hymn with hand chimes in order to perform at the Nativity Service in church and some pupils are able to recognise one or two individual notes, such as "C". Currently pupils are not given any opportunities or guidance to experiment or compose with their instruments.

142 Pupils are animated and show enjoyment, they listen well and relate positively to adults. The firm approach by SSAs ensures good behaviour and attention. The large groups, while providing good role models, inhibit the experiences for some of the pupils who require additional physical support. Pupils with more complex learning needs show enjoyment when listening to musical stories using headphones. All pupils handle instruments with care, while pupils on the autistic spectrum explore

instruments carefully enjoying the physical shape and sounds they produce.

143 Teachers share expertise and work successfully together when working with groups. This provides good continuity and overview, however some groups are too large and pupils who are moved in and out disrupt the concentration of others. There is good use of symbols, signing and use of objects of reference with young pupils. Most lessons are of good pace and offer challenge and variety. Comprehensive planning ensures lessons are interesting with achievable targets. Good demonstrations by the teachers ensure understanding by pupils especially when staff play an instrument and sing.

144 Resources are new with a comprehensive range of small percussion instruments and there are plans to increase the range to larger instruments. Some teachers are able to play piano and guitar adding to pupils' enjoyment of music. Resources include a 'sound beam' and 'midi creator' and the music room is spacious with good acoustics. Pupils with more complex needs and pupils on the autistic continuum would benefit from the opportunity to take part in music therapy sessions. Visiting musicians provide interactive sessions and pupils enjoy visits to the theatre to see musical shows. Older pupils experience African rhythm charts, while young pupils use ocean drums and rain makers.

144 **Physical education**

145 Pupils make good progress in the targets set for them in physical education. Pupils have access to a range of facilities both in school and off site. Not all the equipment was in place during the week of the inspection and much was arriving which will further enhance opportunities to develop a wide range of physical skills. Good links have been made within the community of leisure facilities, school pools and sports grounds.

146 By the end of Key Stage 1 young pupils are given appropriate guidance and encouragement to develop their gross motor movements, they can stop and start within a running activity. They run fast, slide and experience jumping in and out of a hoop and change direction following a hoop giving good eye contact. They especially enjoy interactive games in the soft play room, rolling, sliding and climbing. Daily walking practice to and from the hall for activities ensures that physically disabled pupils are given sufficient practice to improve their skills over time. Pupils with more complex needs follow a therapeutic management programme which is incorporated into all lessons very well i.e. to stand in a frame while working on language and communication skills. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils on the autistic continuum can hit a ball and slide down a slide. When using the swimming pool pupils are improving their confidence by splashing in the water and one boy is beginning to push and glide and another can float on a mat. In Dance pupils in Key Stage 2 follow instructions and make good attempts at copying the teachers movements, they find a space, make circles and stretch in different directions. They especially like dancing to a recording of the Spice Girls and show they understand the change of mood as their movements change. Older pupils display good skills when country dancing and make good progress in extending and consolidating previously learned routines. They take turns, swing a partner and dance competently together. In addition to the school PE programme Key Stage 4 pupils participate in aerobics and team games in a college setting and Post 16 pupils are occasionally given experience of attending a leisure centre for recreational activities and this supports their preparation for leaving school. Pupils and students in the senior department have also enjoyed a golf tournament day and have experienced football skills at the Newcastle ground and visited Durham ice rink. At the Keilder Forest centre they enjoy walking, archery, sailing, abseiling, climbing and horse riding.

147 Where lessons are well planned with clear targets pupils respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment but where targets are not clear pupils are aimless and indulge in repetitive behaviour. Young pupils enjoy the soft play area showing special delight in the lights in the ball pool. They are co-operative and respond well to firm interaction with the adults. Pupils on the autistic continuum are confident in the water and show enjoyment in the sensation of water when using floats. Older pupils show enthusiasm

for their dance routine, working well as part of a group and show great consideration for others. Pupils with more complex needs react with pleasure to music and the movements in the dance.

148 Overall the quality of teaching is good especially where there is an obvious structure to the lesson and teachers have sufficient subject knowledge. Good demonstrations ensure pupils understand what they have to do and clear subject terminology is used well in dance ensuring that pupils understand the movements. Lessons are fun when the teacher interacts with the pupils and good evaluations of movements support further improvement. Good use is made of relaxation techniques at the end of sessions resulting in a quiet reflective time for all. Teachers and support assistants work effectively as a team to maintain a good pace to the lesson and to ensure all pupils are involved.

149 The co-ordinator is new to post and does not as yet monitor her subject but the LEA scheme of work is implemented appropriately. Currently resources are adequate and there are plans to improve them. The new hydrotherapy pool and changing area is very good but not currently in use due to construction difficulties thus preventing pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties from participating in swimming. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to swim on a weekly basis and for older pupils and students swimming is a leisure option in the summer term when some also attend college for physical education learning how to use showers and changing facilities appropriately which develops their personal skills.

149 **Post 16 Provision**

150 The provision for Post 16 students is very good. A separate wing ensures students have appropriate facilities for self advocacy and independent skill development with the opportunity to plan, shop for and cook a meal, to carry out personal hygiene skills and clean and care for a living space. The group are involved in Link courses and community links which include Derwentside College and Houghall College to work towards ASDAN qualifications. Work experience takes place at Tesco, Abbey Sports Centre, Derwentside College and at school with work with the cook and caretaker. The careers officer has close links with the school and spends time each week with the students.

151 The Post 16 teaching area is sufficiently comprehensive to accommodate students with complex needs in order that they can be included in most activities where they show great pleasure in their achievements. Opportunities are provided for the further development of information technology skills. A small range of books are accessible for students to use for reference purposes. Students' work is well displayed and an small area is available for quiet study.

152 The curriculum is comprehensive and covers literacy, numeracy, careers and the world of work, health and sex education, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative arts, independent living skills and social and recreational skills. During the 'Week of Work' all students visit a different company in the community and good photographic evidence shows how well the students interact in a working environment, for example, glass blowing in a glass foundry. The Post 16 Policy includes behaviour management skills courses with an aim to raising achievement by learning styles and methods. A weakness in the curriculum is that recreation activities do not include independent leisure during breaks which are taken with younger pupils and which could further develop their personal responsibilities and independent skills.

152 **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

152 **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

153 A team of five inspectors, including a lay inspector, spent a total of 18 days in the school gathering first hand evidence. Prior to the inspection, the inspectors scrutinised many documents provided by the school and held meetings with the governors, headteacher, staff and parents.

- 154 During the inspection further documents were scrutinised, including teachers' planning, attendance registers, pupils' records, individual education plans, statements, review reports and pupils' Records of Achievements. Pupils' work was scrutinised in all subjects and included displays in corridors and classrooms. Written and photographic evidence of previous work was also examined.
- 155 Observations were carried out in 62 lessons or parts of lessons. Observations were also made at a local college, in a local primary school, at the swimming pool, and during a session with local primary pupils. Two inspectors also attended the school Nativity held at a local church. Pupils were seen during breaks and lunchtimes, arriving and departing. School assemblies and class registrations were observed.
- 156 Discussions were held with the teaching staff and support staff, a number of governors, including the chair and vice-chair, administrative staff and the caretaker, physiotherapist and speech therapist, headteachers from other schools with which the school has links. During visits, staff at other establishments spoke to the inspectors.
- 157 A meeting for parents was held prior to the inspection, and responses to the parental questionnaire were analysed. Inspectors spoke with some parents during the inspection week.

158 DATA AND INDICATORS

158 Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YN - Y13+	56	55	56	33

158 Teachers and classes

158 Qualified teachers (YN - Y13+)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	9.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	6.1

158 Education support staff (YN - Y13+)

Total number of education support staff:	11
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	340

158 Financial data

Financial year:	1998/99
	£
Total Income	384,213

Total Expenditure	383,080
Expenditure per pupil	7,981
Balance brought forward from previous year	4,974
Balance carried forward to next year	6,107

158 PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	56
Number of questionnaires returned:	16
Percentage return rate:	28.6

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	69	25	0	6	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	88	6	6	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	63	31	0	6	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	63	31	0	6	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	75	19	0	0	6
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	81	13	6	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	81	13	0	0	6
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	50	31	6	6	6
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	80	13	0	0	7
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	69	13	13	0	6
My child(ren) like(s) school	88	6	0	6	0

NB: Percentages of responses are rounded to nearest integer and sum may not equal 100. Percentages are in relation to total number of returns, EXCLUDING nil replies.